

**PYRALID MOTHS IN PROFILE: PART 3* –
UDEA FULVALIS (HÜBNER)**

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Past history and present distribution

THE FIRST specimen of *Udea fulvalis* in Britain occurred at Branksome, near Poole, Dorset in 1926 (Curtis, 1968). The following year, a second specimen was taken on 8 August near Bournemouth, Hampshire (Clutterbuck, 1930) and in July 1930 it occurred at Parkstone, Dorset (Huggins, 1932). For several years the species was noted regularly and sometimes fairly commonly in all three localities. The adult was either disturbed from bushes and undergrowth by day or taken at the flowers of lavender and *Buddleia* at night. The larva, however, was never found in the wild. This temporary colonisation was comparatively short lived with the last specimens from Parkstone and Branksome occurring in 1936 and from the Bournemouth District in 1937 (Brown, 1961).

Almost twenty years passed before *fulvalis* reappeared and between 1955 and 1991 I have located a total of fourteen records either as specimens or unpublished reports:

30.7.1995	Swanage, Dorset	L. Price
8.1995	Totland, Isle of Wight	S.A. Knill-Jones
1.9.1958	Freshwater, Isle of Wight	S.A. Knill-Jones
16.8.1959	Freshwater, Isle of Wight	S.A. Knill-Jones
31.7.1967	South Walsham, Norfolk	D. Down
27.7.1971	Usk, Monmouthshire	G.N. Horton
20.7.1991	Highcliffe, Hampshire	E.H. Wild
30.7.1991	Durleston, Dorset	P. Davey
15.8.1991	Highcliffe, Hampshire	E.H. Wild
19.8.1991	(two) Highcliffe, Hampshire	E.H. Wild
21.8.1991	Lymington, Hampshire	A.J. Pickles
1.9.1991	Studland, Dorset	B. Skinner
2.9.1991	Durleston, Dorset	P. Davey

Although pure speculation, most of these records, all of which were at m.v. light, were probably of primary immigrants. However, since 1991 the moth has occurred annually at Highcliffe and is almost certainly resident, even though the feral larva remains undetected.

On the Isle of Wight it reappeared after thirty-four years at Freshwater on the 8 and 11.viii.1993 (Knill-Jones 1994). A further capture in 1994 and two more in 1995 again suggests local establishment. Elsewhere, it is certainly

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resident at Christchurch, Hampshire where it was first noted in 1993, more frequently in 1994 and in good numbers in 1995 (B. Goater *pers. comm.*).

There is a published reference to Herefordshire (Beirne, 1952), but I have been unable to locate any further details of this record.

Life History

The female taken at Studland in 1991 laid a few eggs on the side of a small plastic box and on the netting lid, but not on the leaves of mint provided. They were pale yellow and hatched within fifteen days. As a previous attempt to rear this species (Fryer, 1933) had established that the larva does not feed before hibernation they were provided with short lengths of plastic drinking straws into which they readily entered securing themselves with a few strands of silk. The straws were kept in an airtight container in a fridge maintained at 3°C. In early April one straw housing two larvae was brought up to room temperature (20°C). Within twenty-four hours the larvae began to wander about and were offered catmint *Mentha* sp. and wild clary *Salvia pratense*. However the larvae refused to feed and within a couple of days had starved to death. It was therefore with some trepidation a month later that the five remaining larvae were roused from their diapause. This time they started feeding without delay showing a marked preference for the wild clary. After thirty-two days, the full-grown larva (Plate B, Fig. 1) measured 20mm and had a yellowish-green ground colour. The skin was translucent with the gut appearing as a dark-green dorsal stripe. Either side of this was a broader greenish-white stripe. The thoracic legs were black and the head and prothoracic plate were yellowish-brown; the latter displaying a conspicuous black dash on each side. Each larva pupated within a flimsy cocoon (Plate B, Fig. 2) constructed from a criss-cross network of silk strands and was attached either to a leaf or the paper tissue lining the container.

The dark mahogany-coloured pupa (Plate B, Fig. 3) measured 12mm in length. The pupal period was about a month and all five moths emerged in early July.

References

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